



DECISION MEMO
SPECIAL USE AUTHORIZATION
RICH MOUNTAIN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE UTILITY CORRIDOR
NFS ROAD 7130
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
MENA-ODEN RANGER DISTRICT
POLK COUNTY, ARKANSAS

BACKGROUND

Rich Mountain Electric Cooperative, Inc. has submitted an application for amending their existing special use permit for installation and maintenance of overhead powerlines, including clearing and maintenance of 30 foot-wide right-of-way, 15 feet on each side of the power line with additional width as necessary to accommodate guy wires and anchors. Pine and hardwood trees within the right-of-way would be removed and marketed as appropriate. The application was received and is described below.

- A single phase 7.6 kV service line to seven private properties off of NFS Road 7130, Polk Road 402, 409, 633, and Brushy Creek Road. Length of line to be approximately 19,685 feet on NFS land and approximately 253 feet on Private land. Township 4 South, Range 30 West, Section 5, 6, & 7 of Polk County, AR.

The powerline is collocated over county and NFS roads, resulting in an area of disturbance that is broken and discontinuous (see map). The powerline cross over NFS land in four distinct sections, broken up by three private land blocks consisting of seven different ownerships. The county and NFS roads share the some of the same area as the proposed powerline right-of-way, resulting in a reduced area of disturbance located on NFS land. Of the four sections on NFS land, the lengths are as follows going from west to east (see map).

- 3,046.08 feet, taking out the width of the road that intersects the powerline right-of-way, approximately 2,061.84 feet on NFS land or 1.42 acres of disturbance.
- 4,314.94 feet, taking out the width of the road that intersects the powerline right-of-way, approximately 2,889.48 feet on NFS land or 1.99 acres of disturbance.
- 8,913.50 feet, taking out the width of the road that intersects the powerline right-of-way, approximately 6,229.08 feet on NFS land or 4.29 acres of disturbance.
- 3,411.12 feet, taking out the width of the road that intersects the powerline right-of-way, approximately 2,018.28 feet on NFS land or 1.39 acres of disturbance.

DECISION

I have decided to approve the utility corridor as described above for installation and maintenance of overhead powerlines, including clearing and maintenance of 30 foot-wide rights-of-way, 15 feet on each side of the powerline with additional width as necessary to accommodate guy wires

and anchors.

This activity falls into a category of action that may be excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA), which the Chief of the Forest Service has determined will not have a significant effect on the human environment:

Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land (36 CFR 220.6(e)(3))

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – The project may affect; likely to adversely affect the Northern Long-eared Bat. The project may also impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or loss of viability to the Tricoloured bat, Caddo Mountain Salamander, Ozark chinquapin, Waterfall's sedge, and Iron's Fork burrowing crayfish. A Biological Evaluation was completed March 6, 2020.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – there are no floodplains or jurisdictional wetlands within the project area and none will be impacted by project activities; there are no municipal watersheds in the project area.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- Research natural areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – there are known historic properties located within the project area. Work within the historic property (portions of two powerlines) must be monitored by an archeologist, archeology technician or advanced paraprofessional. Additionally, some trees within those historic properties may be required to be felled and left in place or removed by non-ground-disturbing methods. All work must stop immediately, and a Forest Service archeologist must be contacted, if any prehistoric or historic features greater than 50 years in age, human remains, or other significant cultural resources are discovered during project activities.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Ouachita National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis. Scoping was conducted through February 24, 2020. No comments were received.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Ouachita National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (OBJECTION) OPPORTUNITIES

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are not subject to an administrative review process (pre-decisional objection process) (Agriculture Act of 2014, Subtitle A, Sec. 8006).

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The project may be implemented immediately.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Jennifer Benefield, Natural Resources Manager, Mena-Oden Ranger District, 1603 Hwy 71 North Mena AR 71953, 479-394-2382.

/s/ Lori Bell for

10/22/2020

Troy Heithecker
Forest Supervisor

Date

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